

Q. 124. What is the third petition?

A. 124. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. That is: Grant that we and all men may renounce **放弃** our own will, and without any gainsaying obey Thy will, which alone is good; that so everyone may discharge the duties of his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

Q. 124. What does the third request mean?

A. 124. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven means, Help us and all men to reject our own wills and to obey your will without any back talk. Your will alone is good. Help everyone carry out the work he is called to as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

Prayer is important. In fact, it is most important way that Christians show their thankfulness to God for His gift of salvation.

**Because He has inclined His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live....What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD.** (Psalm 116:2, 12-13) The highpoint of the life of Christian believers is to have communion with God through Christ in prayer.

This does not mean that obeying God's commandments is an *unimportant* or even *less* important part of the Christian life. For without obeying God's will, all prayer is meaningless. If we want to talk with God, but don't want to walk with God, then prayer is just a show and a sham. Praying and obeying really belong together. Prayer is offering to God a life of love that strives to keep God commandments. Psalm 66:18 says: **If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear [my prayer.]** The LORD does not *accept* or even *hear* our prayers if our hearts are in love with sin.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> request of the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Jesus taught us, Jesus brings together these two key parts of true Christian living: praying and obeying, talking with God and walking with God, prayer and the commandments. In this request, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, we are praying for the desire and the strength to obey God's will, that is, to keep God's commandments.

To understand the meaning of this prayer, the catechism focuses on two key words in this request: *will* and *done* – **Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. And so we want to follow this pattern in our study of this 3<sup>rd</sup> request of the Lord's**

**Prayer this afternoon:**

1. **Will** – we are praying that God will enable us to **accept His will happily, gladly, without gainsaying.**
2. **Done** – we are praying that God will help us also to **do** His will willingly and faithfully

### **I. Gladly accepting God's will**

a. When we pray, **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**, isn't it true that we are first of all gladly accepting and embracing God's will as the good and right way for us to walk? Aren't we saying with the psalmist in Psalm 25:4-5 – **Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long** (Psalm 25:4-5)?

- It is true that sometimes the Bible speaks of God's will as His hidden plan for our lives. **Not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven** is what Matthew 10:29-31 teach us in summary. That is referring to God's plan for my life, not His commandment for my life. God's plan is always done; nothing can get in His way!
  - But when we pray for God's will to be *done on earth* as it is in heaven, that means that right now there is a problem: God's will is not being done on earth like it is being done in heaven. Since God's plan is *always* being done in heaven *and* on earth, we know that God's will here refers to His commandments. For His commandments clearly are not being followed on earth by us or by anyone else as well as it is being followed by the angels of God in heaven!
  - So what we are desiring and praying for in this request is that God our heavenly Father will help us to obey His will, that is, His commandments, as perfectly, quickly and devotionally as the angels of heaven do. We are praying for a world where, like the Garden of Eden in the beginning, heaven and earth are in perfect agreement and harmony again! – a world that *is* heaven on earth!
- b. Of course, that starts with **us and all men accepting** God's will – God's commandments – as right and good for our lives. That is the *first* thing that is involved in accepting God's will or commandments for the direction of our lives: that we embrace His will as good. When we pray, **Thy will be done**, we are committing ourselves to His will as the only good pathway for us.
- The catechism puts this prayer in our *mouths* – may the Spirit plant it deep into our *minds* and *hearts*! – **Grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without any gainsaying obey Thy will, which alone is good.** Lord, teach us to accept Your will as the only way that is good and right for us all the time. Not just when things are going well, but also and especially when obeying His commandments becomes very painful and risky (from a human perspective). Then it may seem that His will is not good for us, and in this circumstance **境遇** we will have to go our own way. Just to keep our sanity. Just for basic survival. We are praying against this temptation in tough times: *Lord, help me to see and accept that your commandments are the good and right thing just for me even when they don't seem to make any sense, even when it appears that your commandments are just the worst choice I can possibly make!*
  - This is the pathway that Jesus Himself walked – all the way to death – and by this we were saved! Jesus came to earth in our flesh and blood and said to God the Father: **Here I am, I have come to do Your will, O God.** (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 10:7) **I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.** (John 6:38) And by that will of God we are saved! Now Jesus is saying: as I delighted in God's will for my life and it brought great blessing to you, so also the life I give to you is one of delighting in God's will!
  - Let us also gladly accept God's will as delightful and the only good way for us to walk. It is the pathway filled with blessings.

- **Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.** (Psalms 119:127-128). Then psalmist repeatedly says that the law of God is worth far more than all the gold and silver in the world. It's value is matchless. There is nothing like it in all the earth!
- In Psalm 119:24 we read: **Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors** 指导者
- Paul says: **So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** (Romans 7:12) **I delight in the law of God, in my inner being.** (Romans 7:22)

c. The second thing involved in gladly accepting God's will is that we wholeheartedly renounce our own will. Jesus taught us to pray: **Thy will be done**. He will always do His will, but here we are praying that we always want to do His will for us, not our own will for us. We are truly, fully and gladly renouncing self-will. This goes against the grain of our sinful nature which wants to put my will first because I think my will is safer and more satisfying than God's will.

- To renounce our own will does not mean that we are to reject our human will, for God created man with a will. That's part of our humanity, and God does not want to reject our humanity but to redeem it. But our wills have been taken over by sin, and good will has been perverted 误用 into self-will. Instead of willing what God commands, our human will now *opposes* what God commands and *craves* what sin demands.
- But praise God for His gift of salvation! Through faith in Jesus Christ, my self-centred will has been replaced by a God-centred will. Jesus Christ has planted His human will – His will which delighted in what God commanded Him to do – in our wills so that we are new. And now in Christ we hate what sin demands of us and love what God commands of us. Our wills are now in love with God's will! This is the salvation promised through the prophet Ezekiel:
- **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes法令 and be careful to obey my rules.** (Ezekiel 36:26-27)
- Still, the old nature of sin still clings to us as Christians and every hour we must fight against and renounce self-will, and be renewed in our delight with God's will. I want my desires which run contrary to God's will to be denied and destroyed, and I want instead complete readiness and happiness to do God's will. This is what I pray for. *Take my will and make it Thine, it shall be no longer mine.* (PH 462)
- And I pray this not only for myself, but for all God's children everywhere. When Jesus taught me to say Our Father in heaven, he had in mind that we pray this for all who by faith in Jesus Christ have God for their Father. So we pray for one another in the battle of the wills! Each one here is fighting a battle against self-will. Each one here needs strength from God every day to remember that God's will alone is good. So we pray for each other.
- But it goes further than this. Because we were taught to pray that God's will be done on earth, that means we want the whole earth to accept and do God's will! This is a prayer for Christ by His Spirit to invade human hearts and minds that right now are controlled by the pleasures of sin, and take them captive by His grace to do His will! In that way *His kingdom will come and His Name will be hallowed*. So when we pray, let us not forget the names of those we know personally who are still held captive by Satan to do his will and pray that they may be converted to do God's will.

d. This request leads us also to address a fourth issue: *Where* can we find God's good and perfect will? *How* can we *know* what God's will is for our life right at this very moment? One way to ask this question is to ask: When Jesus became a man, how did he find out what God's will was for Him, the divine Messiah? We read the answer in Hebrews 10 where Jesus Himself is speaking: **Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'**" (Hebrews 10:7) He discovered God's will for His life on earth in the scroll of the book, that is, in the Scriptures, the sacred writings. This is also where we will find God's will for our lives as those who are saved through Jesus. We don't have the same task – He is the Saviour; we are the saved – but we have the same Source Book for discovering the will of God.

- Don't wait for God to send you an email or to speak directly from heaven. Study the Scriptures daily, over and over and over again. Even though all the details are not spelled out there for you – which house you should buy, whether you should use antibiotics, whether you should marry, whom you should marry, where you should study, what kind of vocation 职业 you should pursue, whether you should use Mac or PC – the written scroll of God's Word is filled with commands, warnings, promises, and examples by which the Spirit of Christ will stir your heart, enlighten your mind and direct your feet in His way. This prayer, **Thy will be done**, then also includes a prayer that the Holy Spirit will bless your study of the Scriptures to help you discern from God's Word **what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God**. (Romans 12:2)
- But the main thing is being committed to His will as what is good for your life! When your heart and mind are set on that, the Scriptures will speak to you much more clearly than when you are uncertain about accepting God's will as good.

## **II. Faithfully doing God's will**

The second word upon which we want to focus in this request is the word done: **They will be done on earth as it is in heaven**. This is a prayer not only to know God's will, accept it, and delight 取悦 in it. But, above all, to do it! What does this mean?

- First, it is a prayer for help to obey God's commandments. Many hear the Word and study the Scriptures without a devoted intention to do that Word. But this is a prayer along the lines of what we find in James 1 – *Lord, help us to be doers of the word of God, not hearers only, lest we deceive ourselves into thinking we're Christians when we're not*.
  - Jesus said to His disciples: **Why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do the things I say?** (Luke 6.46) Calling Jesus "Lord" is empty if we don't obey His commands!

- He also said to them: **If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.** (John 13:17) There is no blessing in knowing the will of God alone.
  - James says: **So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.** (James 4:17) Knowing what is right leaves us without any excuse for not doing it!
  - Jesus said: **And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.** (Luke 12:47-48)
  - In this prayer Jesus taught us that *obeying* God's will is essential for God's people. It ranks right up there with God's name being hallowed and His kingdom coming. His will is as important to Him, as His glorious kingdom, and His holy Name. Let us then not in any way belittle obedience.
- b. Second, it is a prayer for us and all men to do God's will here *on earth*. Right now. Wherever you are. As Christians we face a constant temptation to leave the hard things until later. Someday God will take me to heaven and there I will be able to do God's will perfectly. Lord Jesus, come quickly! But right now my life is still being slowed down by the powers of sin and so what's the use of spending a lot of effort on obedience when I can't succeed anyway? Perhaps we don't *say* that, but doesn't that reality of the difficulty of obeying God's will right here, right now pull us down toward mediocrity平庸 – a lukewarm无动于衷 attitude toward obeying God's will?
- But the Lord Jesus taught us to pray against that spirit of complacency自满 and lethargy无生气的. Pray for strength to do God's will *on earth*! That means wherever on this earth he has called you to live and serve Him. In your kitchen. In your classroom. In your office. In your car. When the boss is in a bad mood. When people make foolish choices. When the children are childish (!). When the snow flies. When the printer doesn't work. When the car breaks down. And on. And on. **On earth**. Not sometime later in an ideal world. Yes, *that* world is coming. God has promised it. Jesus has planted the seed in His death and resurrection. But this prayer is for this world right now which is on the way to the world that is to come.
  - Because the world we live in is raw with hardships, frustrations挫折, sickness, temptation, and rebellion, we need to pray this prayer. There is so much that wars against obedience in the little spot on earth that God has given to us. So let us pray fervently踊跃地 that God will give us the grace to **obey** his will **without any gainsaying** (that is, without murmuring诉苦, grumbling发牢骚 and complaining抱怨 about His commands) in our current situation. Lord, lead us through the darkness, help us to do your will on earth no matter what abuses and surprises this rebellious earth throws upon us.
- c. Third, it is a prayer that we may do God's will on earth **as it is being done in heaven**. This phrase is most certainly speaking about the angels of God. For who are the ones in the heavenly realms obeying the commandments of God but the good angels? How do the angels serve the Lord God? Faithfully, swiftly, and worshipfully:
- **The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!** (Psalms 103:19-20)
  - **And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.** (Luke 1:19)
  - **A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him; a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.** (Daniel 7:10)
  - **While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.** (Daniel 9:21)
  - **Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?** (Hebrews 1:14)

In the same way, God has a calling or office in which each one of us is called to serve Him – whether young or old or in between. In our culture we are taught that children and youth are too young to serve. They should play. And the elderly are too old to serve. They should retire (and play too). But even though the demands of our calling from God change according to different seasons of our lives, God's calling rests upon each of us in Christ. Let us desire to be like the angels as we carry out our daily tasks: faithfully, willingly, swiftly迅速 and always in worship. Let us desire, pray for and strive for争取 perfection.

- Paul commands us to serve God **not by the way of eye-service**在(雇主)看着时才干的活, **as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.** (Ephesians 6:6)

So, let us pray that by the power of Christ at work in us there may be unity between heaven and earth found more and more in our lives as we seek to put off this earthly nature and live more and more like heaven.

In this prayer Jesus brings together talking with God and walking with God, praying and obeying, communion and action. These two belong together. If we don't want to walk with God, we cannot talk to God. If we do not talk to God we will not be able to walk with God. But when Jesus Christ lives in us by faith, we have both. We have the desire to walk with God, and we have the right to pray to God. Because of His holiness and His payment for our sin, we may come to Him, even with all the stubbornness and rebellion that still clings to our wills, and God will hear us because of Christ!

- **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with同情 our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** (Hebrews 4:15-16)